(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Information Officers undergo an attachment with the External Publicity Division before taking up their assignments during the course of which they are briefed and oriented on all aspects of external publicity. These are supplemented by instructions from headquarters from time to time.

Transfer Procedure in Central Passport Organisation

7971. SHRI N. GIRI PRASAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any transfer procedure and norms for the employees and officers in the Central Passport Organisation; and

(b) if so, the details therof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) Transfer of all the employees belonging to the Central Passport Organisation Cadre is governed by the guidelines drawn for the purpose which were framed in 1993. The main features of the transfer policy then framed are as follows:

(i) Group 'D' staff are not transferred without their consent.

(ii) UDCs and LDCs are transferable after a stay of 5 years at a station. Their transfers are based strictly on the length of stay at station. Normally these officials are not transferred except, inter alia, on administrative and disciplinary grounds as laid down in the transfer policy.

(iii) Assistants are transferable after a tenure of 3 years at one station. Usually, Assistants are transferred only twice until their promotion to the next higher post of Superintendent.

(iv) Superintendent level officers are transferable after a tenure of 3 years at one station.

(v) Officers upto the level of Superintendent are transferred within prescribed zones.

(vi) Officers of the rank of PROs. APOs are transferable anywhere in India. Their tenure at one station is usually for 3 years.

(vii) Officers who are within 2 years of their retirement may indicate a preference for a station. Such requests are accommodated as far as possible.

The transfer policy is revised from time to time keeping in view the functional requirements of the Central Passport Organisation as well as the interests of the CPO employees. The last revision of the transfer policy was carried out in 1993.

Casual Labourers Discharging Higher Responsibilities in the Central Passport Organisation

7972. SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that approximately 500 casual labourers are employed in the Central Passport Organisation who discharge the duties of Lower Division Clerks, Upper Division Clerks and Assistants.

(b) if so, the number of such casual labourers presently working in the Central Passport Organisation and since when,

(c) whether the deployment of casual labour to discharge higher and regular responsibilities is against the policy of Government; and

(d) if so, what steps are being taken for regularisation of these casual labourers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) to (d) The Central Passport Organisation is presently employing 564 casual labourers over varying period of time. The casual labourers were not engaged against any sanctioned post. They are deployed to work on an ad hoc basis wherever and whenever required, based on exigencies of work.

2. A Special Qualifying Examination was conducted by the Staff Selection Commission in 1993 for the benefit of casual labourers who fulfilled certain prescribed conditions of eligibility. 127 casual labourers, who have qualified in this exaimnation, have been offered regular posts of LDC in various passport offices. Whenever Group D posts fall vacant in passport offices, casual labourers are appointed against regular Group D posts based on their seniority.

Documentary on Mahatma Gandhi Circulated to Indian Mission

7973. SMT. BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) how many non-Indian are estimated to have seen the 13-reel documentary on Mahatma Gandhi circulated to Indian Missions abroad on the occasion of his 125th birth anniversary, by the External Publicity Division;

(b) how many films boxes and video cassettes were circulated;

(c) how much money was spent on this?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) Video cassettes of the documentary, 'Mahatma' on Mahatma Gandhi have been provided to all 149 Indian Missions abroad. Missions have been actively publicising Gandhiji's message through exhibition of this film to audiences in Embassy premises and through loan to interested institutions. As a result of such screenings the film has been shown in most parts of the world. However, it is difficult to estimate the number of non-Indians who may have seen this documentary through such screenings because of the dispersed nature of such exhibitions.

(c) An amount of Rs. 2.6 lakhs has been spent on the film and its distribution abroad.

Foreign Journalists hosted by External Publicity Division

7974 SRI RAM RATAN RAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the names of foreign journalists and the institutions or media represented by them, hosted by the External Publicity Division in India during the last year;

(b) how much money was spent on them;

(c) what was the mode of selection of these journalists;

(d) whether Indian Journalists went abroad on similar schemes in return; and

(e) how much assistance was given to the foreign journalists visiting India and to whom?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) The details of the names of the foreign journalists and the institutions or media represented by them, hosted by the External Publicity Division last year may be found in the enclosed list as per Statement. (*See* below).